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Jesus of Nazareth: who was
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JESUS OF NAZARETH WHO WAS HE

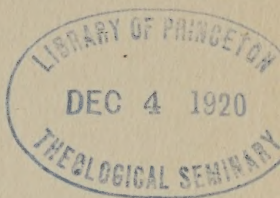
THE ANSWER OF HISTORY AND
REASON

ADAPTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF A LITTLE-KNOWN THINKER

BY
J. GODFREY RAUPERT



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Jesus of Nazareth

Who Was He?

INTRODUCTORY

IT MUST be clear to all reflecting minds that the future of civilization ultimately depends upon the world's attitude towards the Person of Jesus Christ. What must the verdict of enlightened reason be respecting him? Was he an exalted but nevertheless purely human being, to whom a later age mistakenly attributed divine characteristics? Or, was he, in truth, the Incarnate Son of God, the divine Redeemer of the human race, who came to reveal to mankind the one way of life and salvation?

If the first is the case, his authority manifestly was and is a purely human authority, not binding upon the mind and the conscience, and mankind is then not much better

off today than it was before his coming. Men are then still free to form their own judgments as to the meaning and purpose of life and to construct their individual life and their aims accordingly.

If he was divine, the true Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, his authority was and is the authority of God. In this case his laws and precepts are binding upon the human conscience. His death was a true sacrifice for sin, and by it the redemption of mankind has been effected. Then man incurs the gravest possible risks if he ignores or forgets the divine obligations thus laid upon him. The progressive civilization of the world, moreover, and the true reformation of mankind would then be wholly unthinkable without him.

Consistent reflection will show that the thoughtful mind, desirous of truth, ultimately stands before the choice between these two alternatives. The necessity of that choice has probably never been more urgent and imperative than at the present time. Indeed, it may be justly said that the entire world stands before it at this hour.

Many books have been written in defence

of both views, and misdirected philosophical and theological speculation has so hopelessly confused the issues that even serious minds have a difficulty in finding their way out of the existing maze of conflicting controversies.

The present essay does not follow the beaten path. It is not controversial. It is a simple appeal to fact and to history. It sketches, in brief outline, the state of the world as it actually was when Christ appeared, the claims he made, the gigantic difficulties he encountered, the victories he gained — the extraordinary effect of his life and teaching upon the moral and social life of the world. It shows clearly that, with these undeniable historical facts before him, a reasonable man must either acknowledge Christianity to be divine — a true and authoritative Revelation of God to man, or he must abandon any intelligent belief in a moral universe in which order and wisdom and justice reign.

The reader of the book will find that he cannot logically escape one or the other of these two alternatives. He must recognize the utter and hopeless impossibility of that compromise between the two which ill-in-

structed and short-sighted men have so vainly and unsuccessfully attempted.

The entire argument of the treatise is constructed upon the astounding fact that the world has worshipped for 1900 years and worships today — A *Crucified Jew*.

And the question to which it addresses itself is:

Can this extraordinary fact be accounted for on natural grounds, or is its cause divine and supernatural?

I

THE GREAT FACT

THE *World Worships a Crucified Jew.*

This is a great fact of the moral life which neither the believer nor the unbeliever can deny. But, in order to fully realize its significance, we have to analyze it, point by point — both in itself and in its results.

Considered in itself we have to note the following:

(1) The *World* worships. What sort of world? The entire enlightened and civilized world, that is: Europe, America, the civilized parts of Asia and Africa — that world, therefore, which has from the earliest times been the home of great men and of great nations, the fruitful soil of human genius, of science, of literature and the arts; unquestionably that portion of the human family least inclined to allow itself to be deceived or to be dominated by prejudice.

(2) The world *Worships*. What does

this mean? It means that it regards as true the belief that a crucified Jew is God — the Creator of the world, the Ruler of the nations, the Eternal, the Almighty, the supreme Judge of the living and the dead.

By reason of this belief it accords to him and to him alone the highest veneration. It erects temples in which it offers sacrifice to him; in which it sends up to him its petitions and thanksgivings. Upon him it rests its hopes, to him it looks for all good gifts; him it loves with a devotion capable of the greatest possible sacrifices.

(3) The world worships a crucified *Jew*. The object of the world's universal, supreme and unchanging veneration is a crucified Jew. But what is a Jew? In the days when this venerated Jew lived on this earth the Jews were scorned and despised by the rest of mankind. Meanness, ignorance, superstition, rascality were synonymous with the very name. We have proof of this in the writings of pagans, such as Cicero, Horace, Tacitus, Suetonius, Martial. And, so far from modifying this universal judgment of the Jew, the attitude of later times has been of a still more hostile and un-

favorable character. From being despised the Jew came to be hated. Throughout seventeen centuries he was separated from his fellows in the Christian cities like some dangerous and unclean being. But a hundred years ago one could read on the public promenades of France such signs as these: "Jews and pigs not admitted."

And the emancipation of the Jew in these modern times has not greatly lessened this universal feeling of aversion. His equal enjoyment of political rights may turn a Jew into a good citizen, but it cannot turn him into a Frenchman, a German, or an Englishman. In the eyes of the law he is as other men, but not so in the eyes of public opinion. This is only the case in proportion as he ceases to be a Jew. So true is this that to this very day one speaks of a traitor, a deceiver, a usurer simply as — a thorough Jew. Many a Jew is so deeply conscious of this degradation that he hesitates to call himself a Jew. He substitutes for it the appellation — Hebrew or Israelite.

(4) The world worships a *Crucified* Jew. Jesus of Nazareth, mark it well! is not merely a Jew, but a crucified Jew.

Crucifixion was, in his time, the meanest of all forms of punishment. It was generally inflicted upon slaves, murderers, robbers, and disturbers of the public order. Those condemned to it remained on the cross until they died of hunger and thirst and exhaustion, and their bodies became food for the dogs and birds of prey. A crucified Jew, therefore, signified the very lowest of the low, the most contemptible of all that is contemptible — the outcast of the people and the despised of the nations. It follows, therefore, that the civilized world, in worshipping a crucified Jew, commits an act which approaches the highest degree of folly that the mind can conceive. *The most despised creature of the earth enthroned on the altars of mankind!*

II

THE FACT IN HISTORY

HOW and when did this extraordinary but manifest phenomenon take place? It took place 1900 years ago — a fact to which the modern world bears witness in a thousand different forms. Our time reckoning, our historical records, our political and historical and commercial treaties, the most important acts of our public and private life date from this event. One might as well deny the existence and shining of the sun as attempt to deny this greatest and most significant of all facts.

But we have to recognize the further and equally undeniable fact that when this strange phenomenon occurred all the world, with the exception of the Jews, worshipped hundreds of gods. In order, therefore, to enthrone this crucified Jew on the altars of mankind, it became necessary to discredit and destroy both the Jewish and pagan beliefs —

in other words to declare war against the nations of the world, to attack them on those very points on which they were most sensitive and which they were most determined to defend: their religious beliefs and feelings. And with both Jews and pagans, this feeling was of extraordinary strength, their religious beliefs being bound up with all that was flattering to their national pride and their political greatness. Both Jews and pagans firmly held that the stability of their national institutions was intimately bound up with their religious beliefs.

The Jews proved from the history of their race that their national and social well-being depended upon their loyalty or disloyalty to Jehovah. Pagan Rome, on the other hand, the mistress of the world, ascribed her greatness to her belief in the oracles of the gods and regarded this belief as a necessary condition of the continuance of her world-rule. From every point of view, therefore, the attempt to enthrone the crucified Jew on the altars of the gods presented difficulties which the modern mind can scarcely conceive. Let us briefly consider these difficulties.

FIRST DIFFICULTY

*The Undermining of the Established
Jewish Belief*

This undermining included two elements: a destructive and a constructive one. It is from these two points of view that we have to consider the radical upheaval which this change of creed involved. The Jews, it is true, were but few in number in comparison with the rest of mankind. But they clung to their religion with a tenacity and devotion which were very remarkable. This devotion was, in the first place:

(1) *Very Intense and Sincere*. For many years past the Jews had been thoroughly cured of their inclination to idolatry. They would rather suffer every form of robbery, ill-usage, and plundering on the part of the Syrian Kings, than be disloyal to the law of Moses. Under the leadership of Mattathias and his sons many Jews had shed their blood on the battlefield for the defence of their faith. Others like Eleazer and the Maccabees had bravely confessed their faith before the tyrants even under torture.

And their devotion was, secondly:

(2) *Well founded.* The Jewish religion was a true religion. God Himself was its author. The patriarchs and prophets — the pride and glory of the nation — were its expounders; the Jews themselves its sole guardians and keepers. Jerusalem was pre-eminently the Holy City. Its temple was the one sanctuary in the world in which the true God was worshipped and in which He made His will known. A long series of miracles, moreover, served to support their religion.

The loyalty of the children of Israel to the divinely given law had also been to them a source of uncounted benefits. It had secured to them the favor of their proudest conquerors and had given them many advantages over other nations.

And their devotion was thirdly:

(3) *A very selfish one.* The false interpretation which the Pharisees had given of their prophecies had flattered the national pride to such an extent that they had become the source and foundation of their highest hopes. With unreasoning obstinacy the Jews expected in the coming Messiah an

earthly deliverer who would free them from the detested bondage of the pagans, would place the sceptre of the world in their hands, and would bring back, with renewed splendor, the glorious times of King Solomon's reign.

And it was from this religion, so firmly rooted in their hearts and minds, that the Jews were to be turned away in order to be won for that of Christ. They would, therefore, have to be convinced that the pharisaical interpretations of the prophecies were erroneous, that the expectation of a world-conquering Messiah was a delusion. They would have to be persuaded that their religion was merely a type or shadow which was now to give way to reality and that the designation "God's people," for so many years their exclusive privilege, was now to become of universal application.

They would furthermore have to be convinced that their hereditary hatred and defiance of the pagans were sentiments deserving of condemnation. Such sentiments were now to be transformed into sentiments of love — love both sincere and without limitation. They would therefore be expected to

act contrary to that law of Moses which forbade them to have any kind of fellowship in religion with the pagans, and, at the risk of incurring eternal punishment, offer divine worship with them to a man who had been condemned and crucified by both as an evil-doer — indeed they were to acknowledge this man as the God of Heaven and Earth.

SECOND DIFFICULTY

The Destruction of the Pagan Religion

The pagans were no less devoted to their religion than the Jews. Indeed their devotion was all the stronger because their religion ministered to their sensual passions and desires. So far from putting any check upon them paganism flattered all those inclinations of our fallen nature which most crave gratification.

And it did not demand of the proud intellect that it should bow before inscrutable mysteries. No power on earth could compel a pagan to accept as a rule of faith what he chose to reject.

And the pagan moral law was equally elastic. It left the heart free to follow its own inclinations. Those excesses, therefore, towards which human nature inclines so strongly, were not merely suffered and tolerated, but they were positively encouraged and rewarded. Indeed, sanctified as they were by the example of the gods, they had a kind of obligatory character. Sexual and other fleshly excesses were the very soul of the mysterious rites connected with the worship of Bacchus, Cybele and Venus. Public defilement was regarded as an act of religion.

And no thought of a future life in any wise diminished the delights of the present. For by far the greatest portion of the pagan world death meant a return to oblivion — to nothingness. The educated believed in the transmigration of souls, terminating in an ultimate enjoyment of never-ending bliss. In Tartarus, a state or condition enduring for a brief or longer period as the case might be, only crimes of a peculiarly abhorrent character were punished. The gates of the Elysian fields did not close against other vices and evil deeds. And the pagan forms

of worship were as attractive to human nature as the pagan creed and moral law. The gods were honored in magnificent temples by gorgeously arrayed priests who sacrificed animals festively decorated for the occasion. Youths and maidens, in flowing white garments and crowned with flowers, assisted at these sacrificial functions. The Emperor himself, the consuls, magistrates and senators of the states, clothed in their magnificent robes of office, added to the splendor of such ceremonies by their presence. Sweet perfumes pervaded the air and soft voices and select instruments rendered the most enchanting music.

The sacrifice itself was followed by splendid feasts — by dances, plays and gladiatorial contests, by wonderful illuminations and other spectacular presentations. And to these religious feasts and functions ancient Rome devoted quite six months of the year.

Anything and everything, therefore, that could in any way add to the importance and attraction of a religion and that could serve for its support, was enlisted in the service of this sensual worship of the gods. The Romans had imbibed their love of it with

their mother's milk; they looked upon it as their most cherished inheritance. They believed that their well-being was closely identified with it and they had made it therefore the very foundation of their republics and institutions. It was so dear to them that they fought in its defence with greater eagerness than they fought in that of their own lives.

And this religion was so ancient that its origin could not be traced. The common belief was that it had its beginning with the beginning of time and that the gods themselves were its founders. All ages and nations bore witness to it, and the most famous orators fiercely denounced any one showing the slightest dishonor to it. Often the gods themselves were believed to inflict exemplary punishment upon those guilty of such an offence.

The commanders of armies, nay the bravest soldiers, did not dare to march to battle without having solemnly invoked the aid of the gods, in whose temples they deposited, on their return, the trophies of their victories. And if the gods themselves sometimes gave vent to the fierceness of their

wrath, they extended to their devotees, on the other hand, their most powerful protection.

Many of the pagan temples bore inscriptions expressive of gratitude for favors granted by the gods, and the historical records were crowded with accounts of wonders worked by them. So great indeed was the public confidence in the oracles that nothing was undertaken without previously consulting them. For more than 2000 years the most honored and distinguished men of the East and West had been in the habit of walking in solemn procession to temples which were celebrated by reason of the numerous miracles that had occurred in them and in which the gods were believed to have appeared in human form. The Sibylline books promised the Romans that they would continue masters of the world so long as they clung to the ancient usages and, as a consequence, they manifested a burning zeal for a religion assuring them of such a glorious destiny. *Thus had heaven and earth, the gods and men, united in establishing paganism on a solid and secure foundation.*

THIRD DIFFICULTY

*The Laying of the Foundations of
Christianity*

To destroy Judaism and Paganism therefore was the first and, after all, the less difficult task which had to be undertaken. The second was to erect Christianity on their ruins. And what was the demand made by Christianity? It was the worship of a crucified Jew. He was to take the place, on the altars of the world, of Jehovah on the one hand, and of the great Jupiter on the other. But this constituted for the pious Jew, as well as for the pagan, the most detestable of blasphemies — utter madness and folly and, in the eyes of those less adversely disposed, this new religion was simply contemptible, wholly impossible by reason of the degrading death suffered by its founder and the low social status of his first disciples and followers.

But there were other elements in Christianity which rendered it offensive to many of the Jews and pagans. It was the appearance in the world of the truth, of that accus-

ing truth which man fears like the very plague because it throws its searchlight upon his dark deeds and overwhelms him with bitter condemnation. How great must have been the rage and terror of those countless multitudes of depraved hearts when they realized that truth — that all-constraining ruler and potentate — was reasserting the rights of which it had so long been despoiled.

If Socrates, who has been called the wisest of the philosophers, was condemned to death because he had dared to remind his contemporaries of a single exalted truth, what fate was awaiting those who proclaimed many such truths loudly and openly and with a force which nothing could resist? Was it any wonder that both the learned of the world and the ignorant masses united in violently opposing the foundation of the Christian Religion?

And it has to be borne in mind that Christianity itself was the most formidable ally of this uncompromising opposition.

(1) With respect to its *doctrines* it was a religion literally bristling with seemingly incredible mysteries. It declared that a Jew — a crucified Jew — was God. It taught

the existence of one God in whom there are three Persons; of a God-man born of a Virgin, to be consumed under the form of a piece of bread and a drop of wine; and a hundred other doctrines apparently equally ridiculous and unreasonable. And all these doctrines were to be humbly accepted and obeyed. They were to be defended unto death at the risk of suffering eternal damnation.

(2) With respect to its *ethical* teaching Christianity was a religion which repelled men by reason of its severe and uncompromising demands. It did not merely condemn evil *acts*; it forbade even unchaste words and looks, indeed anything and everything in the least contrary to the virtues which it preached. And it preached all the virtues. Penetrating into the most hidden depths of conscience, it examined its every manifestation, and tore out, by their roots and without mercy, the tares and weeds which it found there. It declared a mere passing but complacent evil thought to be a sin deserving eternal punishment.

And it was equally repellent in its hardness. It spoke chiefly of suffering, of tears

and fasting and self-denials, of unceasing watchfulness and conflict with self, of the duty of humiliating self-accusation, and of a hundred other practices seemingly equally impossible and absurd.

Christianity further demanded the observance of hitherto unknown laws which were directly contrary to all the ancient usages and which conflicted with long-established practices and prejudices, such, for instance, as the forgiveness of injuries, the love of all men, even of one's enemies, the equality of all men before God — laws attacking a world and a social system whose very foundation was the institution of slavery.

(3) And in the *form* of Christian worship too, there were elements which were offensive to the pagan mind. The magnificent churches of our day with their glorious paintings and decorations and with ceremonies calculated to move the heart and to impress the senses were not known to the early Christians. Theirs was a mean religion which, in the place of gorgeous feasts, of dances and races and gladiatorial displays, had nothing to offer but gloomy pictures and painful reflections: the duty of much prayer,

the listening to instructions dealing with subjects anything but flattering to human nature. And as a reward for conformity to its laws it promised here on earth the contempt of the wise, the hatred of the world, the deprivation of the things loved best, perhaps death in its most terrible form; hereafter an invisible and intangible good of which the understanding cannot even form any clear idea.

It is certainly not difficult to understand why the ancient world found it so easy to accept the pagan religion and why it clung to it so tenaciously. To accept it was to indulge the strongest passions and desires of human nature, while to embrace Christianity was to crucify that nature. While the former demanded no moral effort, the latter called for the most supreme effort of which human nature is capable. As light is opposed to darkness, so is Christianity opposed to all false religions. It alone makes no compromise with human infirmity; it alone makes war on all vice, on all disorderly passions and inclinations; it alone preaches all the virtues and demands every kind of sacrifice.

Such is the religion with whose foundation we are concerned.

FOURTH DIFFICULTY

The Extent of this Undertaking

And on whom was this unattractive religion to be imposed? On the ignorant and half-civilized inhabitants of some remote villages? No. Or perhaps on some of the cities of the East and West in which both the culture and the corruption of the West were unknown? No. Or perhaps on the barbaric nations; or on the Egyptians, the Greeks, or Romans — races equally cultivated? No. The Christian religion was to be preached to *all* nations without exception, to those of the West as well as of the East, indeed to all the world. The world itself was to be its limitation. The bitter cold of the North, the burning heat of the South, the boundless seas, the sandy deserts and the towering mountains were to form no obstacles to the progress of this religion. The gigantic Roman Empire which regarded itself as the world was to form but part of

the Church that was to be established. The haughty Roman, the sensual Indian, the proud German and the barbarous Scythian were to become subject to it.

The differences of climate, the diversities of race, the instinctive antagonisms of minds, the ambitious cravings for distinction and domination, the varieties of interests, of manners and customs, the characteristic defects of particular nations, were to be no obstacles to the Christian scheme of uniting all nations and races in one society, one faith, and one form of worship. They were all to practise the same virtues and to regard each other as brothers.

FIFTH DIFFICULTY

The Time

And what age was chosen for the preaching of these impossible things to the world, for the imposing upon mankind of a religion whose moral code is so severe and whose rule of faith demands such complete surrender? Perhaps some legendary period in the world's history of which poets tell us,

when men wandered about in forests and deserts without instruction and education, and were ready to accept any teaching brought to them by messengers sufficiently astute to present it in a plausible form; in some golden age when the inhabitants of the earth knew nothing of vice and passion and had nothing in their nature calculated to hinder their acceptance of so severe a moral code? No. The age chosen was that of Augustus; not an age of legend but of history. And what were the characteristics of that age? It was the most enlightened and at the same time the most corrupt of the ages of paganism. It was an age most advanced in a certain kind of culture: the age of philosophers, of poets, of orators, of warriors, of men who were so distinguished in the various branches of human knowledge that their very names arouse the enthusiasm of the young to this day. But it was also the age of men, the records of whose self-indulgences and excesses sound to us like fairy tales today; whom the very thought of duty and obedience drove into a frenzy and whose one aim and purpose in life was to steal, to extort money, to practise usury,

and to indulge with a kind of fiendish ingenuity the most unheard of vices of which human nature is capable.

It was the age of men whose supreme delight consisted in watching thousands of their fellow-men engaged in deadly conflict with each other, or torn to pieces by lions, tigers, and panthers — of men to whom such sights were so ordinary and commonplace that the sun never rose without disclosing such spectacles in one part of the world or another. Piles of gold were spent on them, and the meanest creature on earth had a chance of being raised to the highest dignity of the empire if he promised to provide them in abundance for the people.

All will admit that it could not have been more difficult to transform fierce lions into harmless lambs or blocks of granite into children of Abraham than to cause such men as these to accept the Christian faith and the Christian moral law in the course of a single century.

SIXTH DIFFICULTY

The Calumniators

Christianity had scarcely been established when a number of lying voices made themselves heard and followed it step by step, now accompanying it, now going before it, destroying its first successes and rendering those hoped-for impossible. Although divided in all other matters, Jews and pagans now united in the persecution of the Christians, finding, needless to say, in all parts of the East and West like-minded opponents of the new religion.

The *Jews* denounced the Christians as worthless renegades, as blasphemers, revolutionists, destroyers of the true religion, as enemies of the people of God, disturbers of the public order, defilers of the Sacred Scriptures, as religious fanatics who carried their fanaticism so far as to put a dangerous criminal, who had died at the hands of the executioners, in the place of the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Such were the common accusations made by the Jews against the followers of Christ.

The *pagans*, on the other hand, denounced

the Christians as atheists, whose denials were provoking the wrath of the immortal gods: as dangerous magicians who sought to attain their crooked ends by enlisting amongst their disciples the ignorant and poor, old women and little children, nay those very slaves and criminals who had invented this shameful superstition and whose chief leader had been handed over by his own people to the civil authorities and had suffered death by crucifixion. They spoke of them as monsters in human form who killed children at their feasts, eating their flesh and drinking their blood, and indulging in the most infamous of vices.

These and a hundred other calumnies had become so common that the word Christian was applied to all sorts of criminals, and that those who bore the name were subjected to every kind of punishment, were exposed to the contempt and hatred of mankind. The Emperor Nero, as is well known, caused thousands of Christians to be burnt alive, a herald preceding them on their way to death and crying out: "Behold a Christian, an enemy of the gods and of Cæsar": a procedure calculated to stifle in the hearts

of the people any feeling of pity and compassion.

SEVENTH DIFFICULTY

The Heretics

Thus pursued by universal hatred, Christianity found its necessary support only in the intimate bond which bound its several members together. But after a while there emerged out of their own midst a new obstacle to its progress which was perhaps the worst of them all.

The Christians themselves became divided; heretics made their appearance. Not far from the house of the Last Supper in which Christianity itself had come to birth there arose altar after altar. Already during the life-time of the Apostles many had adulterated the teachings of the Lord and had even denied His godhead. And their revolt necessarily tended to weaken the authority of the chief pastors in the eyes of the newly converted. By the falsities contained in their writings these heretics undermined belief in the genuineness and credibility of the Gospels. and, by both their

teachings and their lives, preached errors which called the most detestable sects into being.

And, like weeds, these sects multiplied in ever increasing number. In less than a hundred years there had arisen no less than eighty. We meet with them everywhere, in Asia, in Europe, and in Africa, following the new religion step by step and deprecating and persecuting it. Learned and unlearned, women, and even deacons and priests became founders and ardent and zealous propagators of these erroneous systems. And the Jews and pagans availed themselves of these divisions in order to demonstrate to the world that the Christians deserved no confidence since they could not even agree amongst themselves. Teachers, they declared, of whom one asserted what the other denied, could not but be treated with indifference and contempt.

EIGHTH DIFFICULTY

The Philosophers

After the heretics came the philosophers, both Jewish and pagan. Never were they

so numerous and so bitterly hostile to truth. They made it their business to discover and to collect the various rumors which were in circulation respecting the Christians. They studied the teachings of the new religion and then, by craftily and purposely intermingling them with the teachings of the heretics, attributed to Christianity the very errors which it claimed to condemn and the abominations which it denounced. Even the Sacred Books and the various treatises in defence of the true doctrine, did not escape their attack and vilification. Thus equipped with the most formidable weapons they made it their business to prove, in their published writings, that there was a good foundation for these various rumors respecting the Christians, that they were really enemies of the Emperor and of the gods, and were abandoned criminals, and that their teachings were nothing but a bundle of foolish contradictions and blasphemies. And these falsified writings were not lacking in plausible arguments, in biting sarcasm, and in learning and persuasiveness. Indeed, so carefully was every conceivable objection to them considered and met, that, at the end of the

fourth century, the craftiest enemy of the Christian religion could not discover and advance a new argument that could be urged against it. And the people, accustomed to pay deference to the words of the learned, became firmly established in the accepted unfavorable views respecting the Christians. It found expression in that clamoring for their blood which disgraced those early centuries: "To the lions with the Christians!"

NINTH DIFFICULTY

The Scoffers

Not merely did calumniators thus deliver Christianity over to the curse of the world, did heretics tear out its heart, and philosophers expose it to the contempt of the learned, but there were those who overwhelmed it with scorn and derision and who made it appear ridiculous in the eyes of the world. We cannot today form even a faint conception of the effect produced by the coarse caricatures by which the Christian doctrine was distorted and travestied in those days in both Greece and Rome.

Scurrilous writings, conceived in the spirit of Voltaire, made their appearance. Even the Christian virtues and Christian monuments were not spared. The minds of the young were impregnated with sentiments of the most profound contempt for the Christians. And the arts too were enlisted in this diabolical work. On the walls of the palaces the disciples of the Crucified were represented in humiliating postures with an ass's head on their shoulders. In the very presence of the Emperor the most sacred mysteries and solemn ceremonies, the most exalted precepts of the Christian religion, were publicly travestied and presented to applauding multitudes in the most grotesque forms. And it is scarcely to be expected of human nature that it should regard with reverence tomorrow what it is taught to regard with scorn and ridicule today.

TENTH DIFFICULTY

The Progress of Christianity

In addition to the hindrances already enumerated it must be borne in mind that

the very progress of Christianity constituted a peril to its existence. Its acceptance is, as we know, in most instances, limited and even in our time is often a source of misunderstandings and divisions. Some who listen to the message of the Cross will accept the grace which is offered and embrace the truth; others will reject it and continue in their unbelief. This, as may readily be imagined, was pre-eminently the case in those early days. Children thus often became Christians while their parents remained pagans. Baptized slaves refused to serve any longer as mere playthings for their masters. The purchasers of heathen images, of incense and of sacrificial animals, ceased to fill the pockets of the merchants. The ties of blood were disregarded and family bonds were severed. The pagan brother betrayed the Christian brother, the father his son, the husband his wife, the friend his friend, and the master his slave. The bonds of society were disturbed and loosened. After a while the cities and villages became divided into two parties, one bitterly hostile to the other. And soon these divisions and conflicts seriously affected the

public life. Dragged before the judges the preachers of the new religion inflamed the passions of the masses and caused them to break out in curses and maledictions against them.

ELEVENTH DIFFICULTY

The Persecutions

Like the waves of the sea, which, on a stormy day, mount to the very top of the rocks, so did these calumnies, accusations and disputes in the course of time reach the very throne of the Cæsars, occupied, as the case might be, by a Nero, a Domitian, a Decius, or a Diocletian.

In their eyes it became an indisputable fact that the Christian religion was a source of social discord and a pernicious innovation of ideas; the Christians disturbers of the public peace, imperilling the security of the state and the well-being of the empire. They came to regard them as impious blasphemers who provoked the wrath of the gods, on whose veneration Rome's permanent lordship over the world was believed to depend. Hence, whenever the barbarians

threatened the borders of the empire, when the imperial legions were defeated in battle, when the Tiber overflowed its banks, when dearth threatened the land, when the earth shook, or an epidemic broke out, the Christians were held responsible for these calamities. Such calamities were invariably followed, therefore, by the most fearful persecutions, by those butcheries which are known to all the world and which would have choked the new religion in the blood of its own confessors had such a thing been possible. And it was an age in which human life was regarded as of little or no value, in which the most revolting tortures formed the most pleasing spectacles for the masses and in which neither age nor rank nor sex received any consideration. In such an age the ordinary modes of inflicting bodily pain seemed measures far too mild for criminals believed to be the enemies of the gods and of the state. More fearful tortures had to be devised and applied.

It thus came to pass that the Christians were scourged with rods, that they were put to the torture and their bodies torn with iron hooks. They were nailed to crosses

and burnt alive. They were dismembered by ferocious dogs and devoured by lions. They were covered with red hot iron plates, fastened to burning chairs, immersed in boiling oil and roasted to death over a slow fire. They were crushed between mill-stones, rent asunder and buried alive. Their barely healed wounds were again and again torn open afresh. With a cruelty which is beyond human imagination their death-agonies were prolonged by peculiarly slow modes of torture. Often they were carefully nursed, and their wounds healed for the sole purpose of exposing their bodies to fresh torments. And care was taken to stifle in the hearts of the people any feelings of pity and compassion. The most fearful butcheries were loudly applauded and even death itself did not satisfy the fury of the people. The remains of the Christian martyrs were seized and burnt to ashes and were then cast into the rivers or scattered to the winds so that not even a fragment might remain over. All Rome was drunk with the blood of the Christians which was daily flowing in torrents.

But even this was not sufficient to quench

the universal hatred of the Christians. Like a devouring fire these persecutions spread to the provinces, to the remotest parts of the empire, bathing a very world in human blood. And it was not a persecution of days, of months, but of years and of centuries, indeed the history of three centuries witnesses to these bloody and fiendish deeds.

But the persecutions were not the only means which were set in operation in order to vanquish the Christians. Every effort was made to seduce them by flattery and promises, by the prospects of riches, of honors, dignities and the favor of princes, of anything likely to win over men who had proved themselves insensible to torture and pain, and for whom death itself had no terror.

Let the imagination strive to form a true picture of the difficulties thus enumerated, and then let us ask ourselves whether we can conceive of a more impossible undertaking, from the human point of view, than the founding of the Christian religion under such circumstances.

World & C.
Christianity
Set

III

THE WEAKNESS OF THE MEANS

IT WILL thus be seen that the transformation to be effected was beyond doubt the most difficult one that the imagination can conceive. But, it may be asked, were perhaps the means to this end of such a character that the seemingly impossible was still likely to be achieved? It must be clear to all reasonable minds that only very exceptional and extraordinary means could hold out any prospect of success in the solving of such a gigantic problem.

And, since human nature could not hope to furnish such means, was the work perhaps to be accomplished by the angels? No. Not by the angels but by men, by creatures of flesh and blood like ourselves. But, if by men, then surely by such as by their talents, their birth, their wealth or power or dignity distinguished themselves from all other men: in other words, by the emperors

and rulers of the world? Again, as we have seen, no. These were, for more than three centuries, the fiercest persecutors of the Christians. Then at least by the cultivated portion of the Greeks or Romans, who were renowned for their wisdom and eloquence? Again, no. Or by the far-famed Egyptians, the founders of the sciences; or by the Gauls or Parthians, of whom even the Romans stood in fear? No. Not by these either, for their moral status was even lower than that of the others.

If by any chance by the Jews, the despised of all races, then surely the best and wisest amongst them, by the rulers or high priests, the rich and powerful of the nation? Again, no. The men who were to effect this transformation were to be men of the very lowest classes of the people—toilers and wage earners, fishermen and publicans by trade.

But did these men perhaps conceal under their rough exterior some unusual powers or qualities? Were they particularly gifted or eloquent? By no means. They were not even accurately acquainted with their own language, were neither wealthy nor experienced in the ways of the world. All they

possessed in worldly goods were their boats and their nets.

But were they perhaps distinguished for their virtues? Once more, no. One of them betrayed his Master, several of the others were filled with jealousy and ambition, all were regarded as men of doubtful reputation.

Neither were they men of the heroic mould of character. The most courageous one amongst them trembled at the voice of a maid servant. And their number (which was only twelve) cannot be said to have made up for their lack of courage and spirit.

Yes, twelve fishermen, twelve Jews, literally the most despised of the most despised nation of the earth, described by one of themselves as "the refuse of the world," these men, according to the unanimous testimony of pagans, Jews, believers and unbelievers, were the heroes of the most gigantic undertaking that has ever been carried out in the history of mankind.

These were the men who were to appear at the courts of sovereigns and to speak at the most renowned seats of learning, who were to become the teachers of kings and of na-

tions, who were to declare the wise to be fools, the philosophers to be know-nothings — the whole world to be sunk in error and sin.

Let any man exercise his understanding to the utmost, he will never be able to imagine an undertaking in which the means adopted stood in such hopeless relation to the end to be attained.

Twelve ignorant Jewish fishermen to convert the world! An enterprise utterly ridiculous surely and doomed to failure!

IV

THE VICTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

WHAT measure of success was likely to attend this extraordinary undertaking? There cannot surely be any hesitation in answering this question. It answers itself when we consider the circumstances of the case and the immense difficulties and obstacles that had to be encountered. Let us once more briefly consider what those circumstances were.

We have, on the one hand, two religions dominating the world: Judaism and Paganism.

The first, although a true religion, is nevertheless a transitory one — is however characterized by intense devotion on the part of its adherents who are scattered in all parts of the world. The second is a false religion: but it is so acceptable to human nature and so strong in its appeal to the lower sense-

life that it is believed to have been founded by the gods themselves. It is moreover held to be as old as the world and to be intimately bound up with the power and well-being of the dominating nation.

We have, on the other hand, a new, severe and simple religion, the uncompromising opponent and enemy of all the traditional and popular usages and of the existing order. On the one side, therefore, the learned, the philosophers, the men of talent, the statesmen, the emperor, the entire world; on the other, a few ignorant men — wholly defenceless and without any kind of aid or support.

On the one side the executioners; on the other the victims. And who gained the victory in this unequal conflict? The world replies: reason. The history of mankind declares: twelve fishermen. Yes! and that history has been written by Jews and pagans — by the very eye-witnesses of these marvellous events who were at the same time the most deadly enemies of the Christians.

And this history teaches us that the victory of the Galilean fishermen was a *rapid*, a *momentous*, a *decisive* and a *lasting* victory.

V

A RAPID VICTORY

ON THE day on which these strange messengers of the new religion made their public appearance three thousand Jews fell down at their feet and accepted their doctrine. On the day after a further five thousand followed their example. With the rapidity with which lightning pierces the clouds or fire consumes a field of dry stubble, Christianity gained for itself the countries of Samaria, Syria and Asia Minor. Into Smyrna, Ephesus, Corinth and Athens too it found entrance; and Arabia, India, Persia, Armenia, Æthiopia, Lybia and Egypt yielded it innumerable disciples.

From the East it moved to the West, and in the course of a few years, there were in Rome itself, in the home of Nero, in the very stronghold of paganism, immense numbers of followers of the new religion. In France, in Spain, in Great Britain and Ger-

many they could be counted in thousands. All this Jesus of Nazareth had foretold. "Before the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, in the course of about thirty years," he once told his disciples, "my religion will have become known throughout the world."¹ The actual events more than fulfilled this prophesy. At the end of twenty years, as a matter of fact, the Crucified had worshippers in all parts of the world.² At the end of forty years, according to the testimony of its persecutors, the Christian religion was known in all the provinces of the empire.³

Without fear of contradiction could Tertullian, the great champion of Christianity, testify before the Roman authorities: "We are but of yesterday and we already fill all that belonged to you: towns, islands, fortresses, even camps, the troops, whether tribunes or decurions, the palace, the senate, the forum; we leave you nothing but your temples."⁴

¹ St. Math. XXIV, 14.

² In the year 52 St. Paul wrote his letter to the Thessalonians. In 58 that to the Romans.

³ It is proved by the Edicts of the Roman Emperors against the Christians.

⁴ Apol. XXXVII, 9.

While the trained armies of the Roman Empire required 700 years of victory in order to establish its world-dominion, defenceless Christianity began its reign over the nations of the world from the very day of its appearance and the Cross of Jesus Christ was planted in countries in which the Roman eagle had never been seen. From the house of the Last Supper the new religion went out into the world; in less than 300 years it conquered Rome and mounted the throne of the Cæsars, and now holds in its hands the sceptre of the world.

VI

A MOMENTOUS VICTORY

IT WILL be admitted that the zeal and energy with which Christianity was propagated was not due to any hope of temporal and material reward. The movement was not a fashionable one, flattering to human vanity, nor was it due to a transitory exaltation of mind produced by excitement rather than by serious reflection. To become a Christian meant the surrender of all worldly possessions and the embracing of the most abject poverty. The follower of Christ exposed himself to the hatred and contempt of his fellowmen, to the wrath of the emperor and to bitter persecution and exile — he signed, in fact, his own death-warrant. And to what kind of death, O my God! did he expose himself? To one attended by unspeakable and unheard-of suffering — to tortures that had to be endured amidst the acclamations and with the approval of the

spectators. And, mark it well! these death-warrants were not signed by a few fanatics who were willing to suffer death for a peculiar unverifiable form of belief, but by the witnesses of sensible and objective facts which they had seen with their bodily eyes and which their hands had handled.

And they were signed gladly and eagerly, not in some obscure corner of some little known country and for a period of a few months or years; but in all parts of the world and for a period of 300 years — by countless multitudes of men and women, by innocent maidens and little children, by military leaders and philosophers, by young and old, by senators and consuls, by the learned and unlearned, by rich and poor.

In vain were the decrees of persecution multiplied and applied to the Christians. In vain did legions of pro-consuls and executioners, furnished with the most diverse and fearful instruments of torture, travel through the provinces of the Empire and spread terror wherever they went. In vain were scaffolds erected and fires kindled and wild beasts from the forests of Germany and the deserts of Africa let loose in the

amphitheaters to devour the Christians. The very fierceness of the persecution but tended to increase the zeal and fervour of the martyrs. The decrees commanding the worship of the gods, issued by the rulers of the world, were treated with scorn, while the commands issued by Christ from His Cross were obeyed regardless of the gallows and the fires. The entire Olym with its false worship was shaken to its foundations.

In the end the functionaries of the law lost their nerve and were filled with shame. The executioners grew weary, their blunted swords fell from their hands and they themselves became Christians. Their blood mingled with that of their victims. The student of the records of this gigantic conflict will find that, according to reliable and conscientious calculation and testimony, more than eleven millions suffered martyrdom during these three centuries and, of these, two millions suffered in Rome alone.

VII

A DECISIVE VICTORY

CHRISTIANITY, as we know, does not merely operate on the surface of life; it penetrates into the deepest depths of human nature. Under its influence the weakest natures become invigorated and the most firmly rooted vices give place to true virtue. Pride is dethroned by humility and hatred and animosity are transformed into love and good will.

In a world in which an Augustus would have found it difficult before the coming of Christianity to discover half a dozen vestal virgins, a host of chaste maidens made their appearance. All the habitual conceptions and notions of life experienced a similar transformation. The crude errors and torturing doubts respecting God and His Providence, respecting man and his nature, respecting the world and its origin and purpose, vanished before so clear an illumina-

tion that this illumination constitutes to this very day the moral superiority of the Christian nations over the pagan world.

With ever increasing force and influence did the new religion thus revise and improve all the laws governing the human race, in the political and religious sphere as well as in that of the civil and home life.

(1) In the *religious* sphere Christianity brought it about that the innumerable pagan deities which gloried in their vices and quenched their thirst in human blood were cast down from their altars. As the rising sun sheds its rays over the darkened earth so did the knowledge of, and faith in, the One God illuminate the world. And in that strong and pure light the moral life of mankind was quickened and beautified.

(2) In the *political* sphere. The doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth caused the nations to regard the foreigner as a friend and fellowman rather than as an enemy. That inhuman saying "*Væ victis*" — woe to the conquered — came to be effaced from the banners of the armies and to be forgotten by the victors. For the law of hatred — that ancient and fundamental principle of

pagan civilization — was substituted the law of love which made all men members of one great family.

(3) In the *civil* sphere. Christianity demonstrated the injustice of slavery and actually abolished it as soon as the circumstances made this possible. Meanwhile it saw to it that the slave was no longer regarded as a thing that could be made use of for good or evil purposes, as a being of a lower order to be treated harshly and without mercy: that could be crucified or thrown to the sharks for a trivial offense such as the breaking of a piece of china or the neglect of a pet bird. It made it possible for the lowest and most wretched of mankind to be raised to the highest and most honourable positions, to become the beloved friend, the guide and instructor of the sons and daughters of the highest and richest in the land. (Call to mind, too, the foundation of the Religious Orders, of Convents and Monasteries innumerable.)

(4) In the *domestic* sphere. Marriage ceased to be regarded as a mere contract or agreement that could be dissolved at the will of the contractors. It was sanctified,

not only in itself but in all the duties and obligations which it entailed. Those two root evils of the pagan world, polygamy and the dissolution of the marriage bond, sanctioned by all ancient legislations, came to be looked upon as crimes and sins against God. And, on the basis of this Christian law, the family life was entirely reconstructed and regained its former worth and dignity. The father ceased to be a despot, the wife a slave, the child a mere helpless puppet and victim.

VIII

A LASTING VICTORY

WHEN we cast a glance over the world as it is today what is it that we behold? Ruins and ruins and nothing but ruins — ruins material and visible, and ruins moral and invisible. Man always and everywhere betrays himself by the perishable nature of his works. The greatest cities of the world — Babylon, Nineveh, Memphis, have disappeared. Carthage, Thebes and Sparta are no more. Of Athens and Corinth only fragments remain. Even ancient Rome, the proud queen of the world, whose imperishableness the gods had prophesied and who boasted that she had effaced the very name of Christ from the minds of men, lies buried with her gods and emperors under the ruins of their temples and palaces. What has become of the institutions of the most famous nations of the world, of the systems of their most cele-

brated philosophers, of the works of the wisest of their law-givers? Where are the great men of talent who drew their inspirations from these sources and the nations into which those inspirations flowed? The common man does not even know these masterpieces of human genius. They are no longer of any use or value. They are mere objects of study and curiosity for the learned, and are regarded today much as we regard those Egyptian mummies which are exposed to view in our museums. They have ceased to be; all is silent and dead. In the course of nineteen centuries, institutions, systems, legislations, empires have tumbled to pieces times without number, and have given place to other institutions and empires which, in their turn, have been superseded by creations equally fragile and imperfect.

Will the edifice erected by those Galilean fishermen suffer a similar fate? The record of its history throughout nineteen centuries gives us the answer. It was manifestly no transitory and passing transformation which these men effected, but a work which, in its essential characteristics, has escaped the fate of all earthly creations. It was not an up-

heaval which affected one century in order to disappear in the next. It was destined to endure and has endured when all else vanished or fell into decay.

Can any enterprise of men be conceived which the lessons of history and the theories of science would have greater difficulty in explaining?

IX

A DIALOGUE

WE HAVE thus studied the fact of the foundation of Christianity in its simple outlines — as Jewish, pagan and Christian eye-witnesses have unanimously recorded it. We do not comment upon their testimony here; we merely state the plain fact itself. But, in order to show how marvellous that event really was, we will present it in the following imaginary dialogue.

Let us, in thought, transport ourselves to those early times when Christianity first appeared in the world and let us assume with St. John Chrysostom that a pagan philosopher meets the Son of Mary as he is beginning to preach his doctrine.

Jesus is alone. He is walking along, dressed in the garb of an ordinary working man, carrying a stick in his hand.

“Whither art thou going?” inquires the philosopher?

"I am going to preach my doctrine," replies Christ.

"What is thy intention in selecting an obscure village of Judæa for the preaching of thy doctrine?"

"I want to convert the world."

"What, thou desirest the world to abandon its gods, its religion, its laws and customs, and to accept thy doctrines and precepts? Art thou wiser than Socrates, more eloquent than Plato, who could not find acceptance of his teaching in any part of Attika?"

"I do not call myself eloquent or learned."

"Who art thou then?"

"I am known as the son of a poor carpenter of Nazareth."

"By what secret means then hast thou provided for the success of thy undertaking?"

"I have hitherto passed my days in the workshop of my father, have worked with him for my daily bread. I am now passing through the land. A few disciples have followed me. I intend to commit to them the task of making my doctrine known to the nations of the world."

"Thy disciples are then, I presume, men distinguished for their noble birth and the superiority of their talents?"

"My disciples are twelve fishermen who possess nothing but their boats and their nets — twelve Jews — and thou knowest with what contempt the Jews are regarded by the other nations."

"Thou countest then perhaps on the protection of some mighty monarch?"

"I shall not have greater enemies amongst mankind than the kings and rulers of the earth. They will employ all their power to render my doctrine of no effect."

"But, perhaps thou possessest great riches and hopest to secure followers by their expenditure?"

"I have not where to lay my head. I have been poor from my birth and, in accordance with my teachings, my disciples will be poorer even than myself. It is by alms and by the works of their hands that they will have to live."

"But thy doctrine furnishes thee nevertheless with a well-grounded hope of success?"

"My doctrine rests on myteries which mankind will regard as foolishness. I shall, for instance, cause my disciples to proclaim that I have created heaven and earth, that

I am God and man, that I have died on a cross between two thieves (for it is in this manner that I am to end my life). They will further have to proclaim that I rose from the grave after three days and that they saw me with their bodily eyes ascend into Heaven."

"But, if thy doctrine is so difficult of belief, perhaps thy moral precepts are easy of acceptance and flattering to human passion?"

"My moral precepts declare war against all human passions, condemn all vices, command the practice of every virtue, and threaten to visit even an evil thought with eternal punishment."

"But perhaps thou promisest magnificent rewards to those who embrace thy doctrine gladly?"

"I promise them here on earth utter contempt, the hatred of mankind, prison and the stake — indeed death in its most painful forms. After this life they may hope for rewards such as the mind of man cannot conceive."

"In what parts of the world and to what kinds of people dost thou purpose to proclaim this new wisdom? Doubtless in some

obscure corner of thy own country and to a few persons as ignorant as thy disciples?"

"My doctrine will be preached in Jerusalem in the synagogue, in Athens in the courts of justice, in Rome in the palace of the Cæsars — in the cities as well as in country places, indeed in the uttermost parts of the earth."

"And thou hopest for the success of thy undertaking?"

"Beyond doubt. I shall, ere long, be acknowledged as God, as the Lord of heaven and earth. The entire world will be transformed. The statues of the gods will fall. In all parts of the world the nations will come forward and embrace my doctrine. Even kings will prostrate themselves before the instrument of my death and will add it to their crowns as their most precious ornament. All over the earth temples and altars will be erected and they will have their priests and worshippers. Perhaps thou thyself wilt some day shed thy blood in testimony of the divinity of my person and the truth of my doctrine."

"Oh, thou foolish man! Thy place is not here but in some madhouse! Go back to

thy father's workshop and stay there for the rest of thy life! Thy enterprise is folly unspeakable!"

The philosopher is right. According to ordinary human judgment the attempt to convert the world by the instrumentality of twelve fishermen, and to bid defiance to the powers of earth is the very height of foolishness. And yet this enterprise was carried out, as the history of the world testifies, and it was carried out rapidly and in the manner and by the means foretold by Christ.

And on this fact rests the faith of Christendom. It is only when men like Proudhon, Renan, Strauss and the rest of the sceptics, when philosophers and spiritists shall have succeeded in destroying this fact that they will be able to boast of having shaken the foundations of our Faith. Until then we shall continue to laugh at their dwarfish efforts and shall justly regard them as ignoramuses and imbeciles.

If the ancient philosopher, of whom we have spoken, could today rise from his grave and, like ourselves, witness the religion of Jesus of Nazareth holding sway over the

civilized world, would he doubt the miracle of its foundation? Would he not exclaim in amazement: This is a thing beyond human power. It is, therefore, manifestly the work of God.

But before we assent to this explanation of the philosopher let us see if it is possible to discover some other one and, in order to save time, we will first of all briefly summarize the facts which we have gathered in the course of our enquiry.

X

A SUMMARY

WE HAVE thus far stated the simple facts with regard to the establishment of the Christian religion as we would state any other self-evident fact without entering upon the question as to whether the cause of this most astounding transformation be human or divine. It will be admitted that to deny these facts would be equivalent to shutting one's eyes to the light of the sun and to destroying the very possibility of all historical certainty.

We must now summarize these facts and the effects involved in them as follows:

(1) Nearly two thousand years ago the world was pagan.

(2) The world is Christian today.

(3) The transition from Paganism to Christianity was the work of one person called Jesus of Nazareth, who was assisted in this work by twelve disciples.

(4) Jesus of Nazareth was a crucified Jew.

(5) A Jew, and more especially a crucified Jew, was the most despised being on earth.

(6) For nearly two thousand years the world has worshipped this crucified Jew. It has done this and is still doing it of its own free will, not being forced to it by any human power or attracted by any earthly reward.

(7) In order to worship this crucified Jew, eleven million martyrs of every class of society and of every country of the world, have, throughout three centuries, gladly embraced death amidst the most terrible sufferings and tortures. Thousands have followed their example since that time. They are still following it today whenever the occasion arises. In order to enjoy the privileges of their worship, uncounted numbers of men and women of every age, country and social standing, unceasingly wage war against their strongest natural inclinations, impose upon themselves severe mortifications, part from those dearest to them, strip themselves of their worldly possessions and consecrate themselves, without temporal reward,

to the care of the sick and the suffering.

(8) Through the worship of the crucified Jew mankind has marvellously progressed in spiritual knowledge and discernment, has advanced in virtue and in true culture and enlightenment. We have proof of this in the smallest Christian child which knows more of the one thing really worth knowing, viz., of God, of Providence, of man, his nature, his duties, and the purpose and end of his life, than Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca — the most famous philosophers of the ancient pagan world. Further proof is furnished by the humblest Christian village in which are entertained more exalted ideas of the dignity of man, the social status of woman, the duties of parenthood, than in the whole of that ancient world.

It is proved by the peoples of Europe and America, who were once barbarians but who, through the worship of the crucified Jew, have become the founders of European and American civilisation. It is finally proved by the map of the world which demonstrates the fact that we meet with enlightened views of life, with true fervor and education, wherever the Crucified is worshipped.

(9) On the other hand there is the fact that all those nations which do not worship the Crucified are remaining unprogressive and in a state of slavery and barbarism. Think of the Chinese, the Indians, the Turks, the Arabs, the Negro races—in short study the map of the world.

(10) No people has ever broken or is ever likely to break with paganism and enter on the path of progress unless it worships the Crucified, and its progress will be in proportion to its zeal and earnestness in respect of that worship. All the nations of antiquity and of modern times — indeed the entire history of the world — witness to this fact.

(11) Every nation which ceases to worship the Crucified parts with its high moral ideals, then loses its peace and well-being, and finally disappears altogether. Or it sinks back into the night of barbarism and slavery and strays from the path of civilisation. And it does this in the degree in which it departs from the Crucified. We have evidence of this in the peoples of Asia and Africa, where ignorance and savagery are striving for the mastery, and in the condition of some of the nations of modern

Europe which are shaken to their foundation by internal discords and hatred and revolution and by the propagation of false systems of scientific and philosophic thought.

(12) There is, on the other hand, the fact that in spite of the most fierce and ceaseless attacks of armed tyrants, of intellectually well-equipped unbelievers, of the scornful ridicule of bestial sensualists, the Crucified has maintained himself on the altars of the world for a space of more than nineteen centuries and amidst upheavals which have transformed the face of the earth, have wrecked empires and republics and have undermined the best and strongest of man's social systems and institutions. In a world in which all the works of men are subject to the law of death and dissolution and are transitory and perishable, he alone continues to be loved and adored.

These are the visible, tangible and undeniable facts which are involved in that main fact stated in the first chapter of this work: *The World Worships a Crucified Jew.*

XI

TWO EXPLANATIONS

FIRST EXPLANATION

HOW are these seemingly incredible facts to be explained? Quite easily, replies the Christian.

The worship, throughout eighteen centuries and by the most cultivated nations of the world, of a crucified Jew is a sacred mystery — so profound that the human intellect cannot fathom it. The other mysteries of Christianity are equally impenetrable to human reason. Its moral precepts, too, transcend the natural powers of man. This is a truth which cannot very well be denied. Nevertheless, I can understand this worship of the crucified Jew. I can account for this faith in the impenetrable mysteries of Christianity — this obedience, on the part of the noblest minds and the most advanced nations of the world, to seemingly impossible moral

precepts. *Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God — is God. This is the mystery.* It is because of his divine nature and power that he has triumphed over the greatest difficulties by the employment of the weakest means imaginable. He, the source and fountain of all life and virtue, has poured out some of his divine gifts upon the world and, as a consequence, the world has believed and obeyed. By faith in him and by the performance of the good works enjoined by him, it has raised itself to a high degree of religious and national and social well-being. Whenever it does not obey this law and draw near to this source of light from which all perfection flows, it continues in darkness and degradation. Or whenever it withdraws itself again from this obedience it sinks back into its former miserable and degraded condition — just as darkness covers the earth when the sun goes down. In short, God has manifested Himself. A miracle has occurred. In this way, and in this way alone, all is explained and accounted for.

SECOND EXPLANATION

The unbeliever, on the other hand, exclaims: Miracles are nursery tales. They have never occurred except in the imagination of the foolish and ignorant. The learned do not credit them. In other words, therefore, the world has been converted without the occurrence of miracles. Jesus is not God, nor the son of God. He is simply a Jew like any other Jew, a human being like any other human being — a philosopher like any other philosopher — possibly somewhat more able and talented than they. The twelve apostles were twelve fishermen like any other twelve fishermen. God was neither with him nor with them.

According to this explanation, therefore, the problem is solved as follows: There was once a crucified Jew and there were twelve fishermen. These latter were sent out by the former to preach his doctrine. In consequence of their preaching the world was converted and worshipped the crucified Jew as the God of heaven and earth. Cause and effect, means and end, thus stand in perfect natural relation. There is nothing divine

and supernatural here at all. All is simple and natural and easily explained according to the necessary laws of human thought. We will, for argument's sake, accept this latter solution and see from the inference to be drawn from it whether it is the correct one or not.

XII

VARIOUS INFERENCES

(1) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that a crucified Jew, devoid of learning, of means, of power and of influence, should, assisted by twelve fishermen, have persuaded the entire world to destroy the images of its gods, to burn down its temples, to change its laws, to improve its morals and to worship him, the Jew, who was crucified like any other criminal between two thieves, as the One God of heaven and earth.

(2) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that, for a period of three centuries, millions of men and women, rich and poor, rulers of states and commanders of armies, senators and consuls, in Asia, Africa, Greece, Rome, France, Spain and Germany — indeed in all parts of the world, should have been content to let themselves be torn to pieces, to be crushed or burned to death, to be drowned and dismembered —

all in order to enjoy the honor and privilege of worshipping, as the one God of heaven and earth, a crucified Jew who was nothing but a Jew.

(3) It is perfectly natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that, after the lapse of eighteen centuries and in spite of human progress and enlightenment, the world should not merely continue this degrading idolatry, but that several hundred millions of intelligent men and women of all nations should today be worshipping the crucified Jew who was nothing but a Jew — that they should allow themselves to be strangled for his sake and that they should be willing to sacrifice for him their possessions, their liberty, their families and worldly prospects — indeed all that they love best in this world.

(4) It is perfectly natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that the world should have become freer, more civilized and virtuous, indeed happier in every respect, since it committed that greatest of all follies — to worship as the God of heaven and earth a crucified Jew who is nothing but a Jew.

(5) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that that portion of mankind which refuses to worship this crucified Jew as the God of heaven and earth should remain sunk in the lowest condition of barbarism and slavery and in a state of moral corruption and wretchedness.

(6) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that any such degraded portion of mankind should emerge from its condition of barbarism and moral corruption and enter upon the path of progress and civilization as soon as it acknowledges this crucified Jew as the God of heaven and earth.

(7) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that all those nations which cease to worship this crucified Jew sincerely and loyally, should part with their culture, their peace and their moral achievements and, falling victims to incessant revolutions and internal disorders, sink back into that degrading pagan despotism from which the worship of the crucified Jew had delivered them.

(8) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that a crucified Jew

should have passed with one bound from the Cross on which he terminated his life to the altars of the world, and should have maintained himself there in spite of the most desperate efforts of human craft and power and passion to remove him and while empires and social systems as well as institutions fell into ruins.

(9) It is quite natural and a simple matter of cause and effect that all the nations of the world, which for 4000 years had been looking for a divine Redeemer, who was to establish his religion of justice and truth and virtue on earth, should have recognized that Redeemer in a crucified Jew and should have ceased, with his appearance, to look for any other: that God, who is a God of infinite power and truth and justice, should have permitted this Jew to make himself the object of human faith and worship, to work the works of God, to instruct, console and bless mankind, when he is neither God nor God's ambassador but a contemptible criminal and deceiver who richly deserved the cross on which he was crucified.

All this, it is assumed, is perfectly natural and quite easy to understand. In all this

there is nothing miraculous, nothing supernatural, nothing divine.

Now, in order to better enable every thinking man to form a correct judgment as to whether this latter interpretation of these extraordinary events is true or false, let us construct the following imaginary but corresponding parallel.

XIII

THE GREAT HISTORICAL EVENT RE-ENACTED

IN ORDER to determine whether or not the conversion of the world with all its known consequences, by a crucified Jew and twelve fishermen, was a natural occurrence and a simple matter of cause and effect and whether or not it transcends human possibility and has anything in it of a miraculous character, we will invite a well-known unbeliever, say the late M. Renan, to give us a repetition of that world-moving event. In view of M. Renan's well-known sympathy with "deluded" mankind who, according to his opinion has been weighed down by the degrading yoke of Christian idolatry for so many centuries, we are convinced that he would willingly enter upon such an experiment.

Let us assume then that M. Renan, who, as we all know, proudly rejected the doctrine

of the divinity of Christ, on leaving his house one morning beholds the son of a carpenter sitting in front of his father's workshop. He calls to him and says, "I am M. Renan, a learned man, a member of the Academy. Scientific research has convinced me that the foundation of Christianity is a purely human work. Jesus is not God. He has not worked any miracles. His twelve apostles were deceivers. They suffered from mental hallucinations and imagined that they saw and heard things which in reality never occurred. My books here will prove to you the truth of this assertion. With the exception of myself and my disciples the whole world has, for more than 1900 years, fallen victim to a contemptible fraud. In order to convince you that it is really so I am willing to re-enact those occurrences in which Jesus was the central figure and hero.

"And I have selected you to carry out this experiment, the success of which will make us both famous. I want you to play the part of the Nazarene with which you are well acquainted and which you are peculiarly qualified to play. You are a car-

penter and the son of a carpenter, and you will require for the success of this undertaking no supernatural assistance or miracles. Proceed at once then and make yourself famous."

At the words of the learned academician the young carpenter leaves his father's workshop and hastens to the banks of the Seine where he gathers twelve fishermen round him and says to them: "All of you here know me personally. You know that I am a carpenter and the son of a carpenter. It is for something like twenty years that I have been with my father in his workshop and you have often seen me there when you have come for the mending of your boats. But, my friends, you are all mistaken, I am not what you believe me to be and what I seem to be. I am really God and have created heaven and earth. I am determined to have the whole world acknowledge and worship me as such to the very end of time. And I want you all to share in my glory. Now my plan is this: I shall begin my work by going begging and preaching through the villages and market places near Paris. Some of those whom I shall be

addressing will attend and follow me; others will scorn me and turn away. In the course of time I shall be accused of various crimes, and I shall behave in such a way that they will condemn me to death and execute me on the scaffold. But all this will constitute my triumph. Three days after my execution I shall put my head on my shoulders again and return to life, and I shall say to you, 'Go teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the carpenter of Paris, urging them to believe and to do all the things that I have told you and that I have commanded you to do.'

"You are to begin your preaching in Paris. Pass through its streets and public places and arrest the attention of the passers-by. Say to them: 'Hear the great news; the young carpenter who passed through the country a little while ago, begging and preaching and who had himself condemned and executed by the legal authorities, is not a mere man but the son of God and the creator of heaven and earth.'

"In order to enjoy the honour and privilege of worshipping him, all of you without exception — men, women and children, rich

and poor — must first of all confess that you and your fathers and all the nations of the earth have been under a delusion and the victims of the grossest possible of errors. You must, therefore, humbly cast yourselves down at our feet and confess to us all your sins, even the most secret ones, awaken sorrow and contrition for them in your hearts, and perform the works of penance which we shall impose upon you.

“You will then have to be ready, and without offering any opposition, to endure abuse and contempt, to let yourselves be cast into prison, to be scourged unto blood and finally to have your heads cut off — all the while thanking God for these things and believing in your hearts that these sufferings really constitute your greatest happiness.

“All this, my friends, you are to proclaim in every part of the great city. You must then pass on to the country districts, cross the Alps, the Pyrenees and the ocean and preach this doctrine in the uttermost parts of the earth.

“I cannot conceal from you the fact that the whole world will laugh at you. The educated and well-to-do will say that you

are the victims of intoxicating drink. Crowds of people, and especially the children, will run after you and mock you and throw stones at you. All this will cause great commotion in the world. The police will arrest you and drag you before the magistrates. The guardians of the law will reprove you and forbid you to preach my doctrine. But you must not obey them. On the contrary you must continue your preaching with all the greater eagerness and diligence. You must be content to be arrested, to be repeatedly scourged and to be imprisoned. In order to silence you they will finally put you to death. To this too you must offer no opposition, for in this way the highest possible good will be attained.

“When this shall have happened we shall have gained a complete victory. The whole world will crave conversion to my doctrine. It will acknowledge me as the one true God. I shall be worshipped everywhere — first in Paris, then in the departments of the Seine and in the other provinces. From Paris this worship will spread to Rome, to London, to Petrograd, Madrid, Constantinople and Pe-

king. In the course of time my father's workshop will be turned into a beautiful sanctuary, to which crowds of pilgrims will journey from the four quarters of the earth and they will honour my home by the riches of their gifts and offerings. And you, my twelve apostles, will become twelve saints, whom the entire world will honour and invoke. Your bones will be enshrined in gold and marble and placed on the altars of the churches. Artists will carve statues of you and paint your images on flags and banners, and not merely in Paris but in all parts of the world and to the end of time these will be borne in solemn processions in your honour and to your memory. You will thus obtain immortality — an immortality above and beyond that endless happiness of Heaven which I promise you for all eternity. Great joy will thus be yours; great glory for yourselves and for your children!

“You will thus find that the conversion of the world will not be a difficult matter and you know now what your mode of procedure is to be. It is, as you see, the easiest thing imaginable — perfectly natural and a simple matter of cause and effect, in no way tran-

scending the ordinary powers of man or requiring the working of miracles.”

Is it necessary to ask how some such statement as this on the part of the young carpenter would be likely to be received by the twelve fishermen? We can almost see them getting angry and raising their fists at the thought that somebody is fooling them.

We can imagine them returning to the city and proclaiming aloud that they have met a young carpenter of the suburbs who has lost his reason. And no one will be surprised to hear that the new god has that very day been transferred to the state asylum where, instead of the divine honour spoken of by him, a maniac's cell has been assigned to him.

XIV

THE FINAL AND INEVITABLE INFERENCE

IT WILL be conceded that the undertaking of the carpenter of Paris has thus been shown to be the very height of folly. And yet this folly could certainly not be any greater than that of Jesus of Nazareth on the assumption that Jesus was a mere mortal man like ourselves — an ordinary human being, born in a stable and brought up in the workshop of a carpenter, and that he accomplished his work of redemption without the aid of supernatural and miraculous assistance and intervention.

Indeed the undertaking of the former must be regarded as even less unreasonable than that of the latter. For the standing of a carpenter of Paris is even better than that of a carpenter of Nazareth. A guillotined Frenchman is surely not inferior to a crucified Jew. And twelve fishermen of the

banks of the Seine cannot be regarded as inferior in education and moral courage to twelve fishermen of the lakes of Galilee. To worship a French citizen of the twentieth century should not be any more difficult than to worship a Jew of the age of the Emperor Augustus. The attempt, therefore, to account for the foundation of Christianity by purely natural means is ridiculous in the extreme. And yet there is no effect without a cause and, whatever the unbeliever may say, Christianity is a fact — a fact which confronts him everywhere in all its extent and magnitude. But, since there is no *human* cause to explain it, he must either assume the existence of an effect without a cause, or he must admit the cause to be divine and supernatural. In that case God was most certainly concerned with it and a miracle has occurred. But if God is concerned with it, Christianity is true and is wholly and altogether true. And to all its doctrines and moral precepts there can be but one answer: Credo, I believe.

Now Christianity declares:

That man has fallen.

That man has been redeemed.

That man has been redeemed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who became man.

That man has an immortal soul.

That there is an eternal Hell.

That there is an eternal Heaven.

That there is a Church instituted to preserve and proclaim these truths.

That this Church is to endure to the end of time.

To all these dogmas of Faith then I assert with head and heart and exclaim again and again, I believe; yes, I believe.

Again, Christianity provides me with the means by which it is possible for me to escape Hell and to gain Heaven and, to this end, imposes upon me the following duties and obligations:

I must love God above all things and my neighbor as myself.

I must forgive injuries from my heart.

I must not covet others' goods.

I must live a poor, humble and self-denying life.

I must confess my sins and receive Holy Communion.

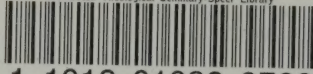
To all these things I assert with head and heart and exclaim again and again, I believe; yes, I believe.

Since Christianity is true then and altogether true it follows that all those systems of our time which are contrary to it, such as Rationalism, Pantheism, Materialism, Socialism, Spiritism, etc., are false — utterly false. For there cannot possibly be truths that contradict each other.

The aim and purpose which we had in view in entering upon this examination is thus achieved. The Christian of the twentieth century is, by this inevitable inference, furnished with a shield of defence, which the sharpest weapon of the enemy cannot pierce. He is placed within a fortress, which is impregnable, where he is secure from all the attacks of his enemies and where he can remain calm and unmoved amidst all the storms and perils of the times. His safety consists in that magic and inclusive word: *I believe*. I believe in a fact which defies all human explanation and which is beyond the power of all human achievement and which must therefore be supernatural and divine.

THE END

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